



# **Integrated quality and enhancement review**

**Summative review**

**Northern College**

**June 2011**

**SR 75/2010**

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2011

ISBN 978 1 84979 391 9

All QAA's publications are available on our website [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)

Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

## Preface

The mission of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) is to safeguard the public interest in sound standards of higher education qualifications and to inform and encourage continual improvement in the management of the quality of higher education. As part of this mission, QAA undertakes reviews of higher education provision delivered in further education colleges. This process is known as Integrated quality and enhancement review (IQER).

## Purpose of IQER

Higher education programmes delivered by further education colleges (colleges) lead to awards made by higher education institutions or Edexcel. The awarding bodies retain ultimate responsibility for maintaining the academic standards of their awards and assuring the quality of the students' learning opportunities. The purpose of IQER is, therefore, to safeguard the public interest in the academic standards and quality of higher education delivered in colleges. It achieves this by providing objective and independent information about the way in which colleges discharge their responsibilities within the context of their partnership agreements with awarding bodies. IQER focuses on three core themes: academic standards, quality of learning opportunities and public information.

## The IQER process

IQER is a peer review process. It is divided into two complementary stages: Developmental engagement and Summative review. In accordance with the published method, colleges with less than 100 full-time equivalent students funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) may elect not to take part in Developmental engagements, but all HEFCE-funded colleges will take part in Summative review.

## Developmental engagement

Developmental engagements explore in an open and collegial way the challenges colleges face in specific areas of higher education provision. Each college's first, and often their only, Developmental engagement focuses on student assessment.

The main elements of a Developmental engagement are:

- a self-evaluation by the college
- an optional written submission by the student body
- a preparatory meeting between the college and the IQER coordinator several weeks before the Developmental engagement visit
- the Developmental engagement visit, which normally lasts two days
- the evaluation of the extent to which the college manages effectively its responsibilities for the delivery of academic standards and the quality of its higher education provision, plus the arrangements for assuring the accuracy and completeness of public information it is responsible for publishing about its higher education
- the production of a written report of the team's findings.

To promote a collegial approach, Developmental engagement teams include up to two members of staff from the further education college under review. They are known as nominees for this process.

## Summative review

Summative review addresses all aspects of a college's HEFCE-funded higher education provision and provides judgements on the management and delivery of this provision against core themes one and two, and a conclusion against core theme three.

Summative review shares the main elements of Developmental engagement described above. Summative review teams however, are composed of the IQER coordinator and QAA reviewers. They do not include nominees.

## Evidence

In order to obtain evidence for the review, IQER teams carry out a number of activities, including:

- reviewing the college's self-evaluation and its internal procedures and documents
- reviewing the optional written submission from students
- asking questions of relevant staff
- talking to students about their experiences.

IQER teams' expectations of colleges are guided by a nationally agreed set of reference points, known as the Academic Infrastructure. These are published by QAA and consist of:

- *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*, which includes descriptions of different higher education qualifications
- the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*
- subject benchmark statements, which describe the characteristics of degrees in different subjects
- guidelines for preparing programme specifications, which are descriptions of what is on offer to students in individual programmes of study
- award benchmark statements which describe the generic characteristics of an award, for example Foundation Degrees.

In addition, Developmental engagement teams gather evidence by focusing on particular aspects of the theme under review. These are known as 'lines of enquiry'.

## Outcomes of IQER

Each Developmental engagement and Summative review results in a written report:

- Developmental engagement reports set out good practice and recommendations and implications for the college and its awarding bodies, but do not contain judgements. Recommendations will be at one of three levels - **essential**, **advisable** and **desirable**. To promote an open and collegial approach to Developmental engagements, the reports are not published.
- Summative review reports identify good practice and contain judgements about whether the college is discharging its responsibilities effectively against core themes one and two above. The judgements are **confidence**, **limited confidence** or **no confidence**. There is no judgement for the third core theme, instead the report will provide evaluation and a conclusion. Summative review reports are published. Differentiated judgements can be made where a team judges a college's

management of the standards and/or quality of the awards made by one awarding body to be different from those made by another.

Colleges are required to develop an action plan to address any recommendations arising from IQER. Progress against these action plans is monitored by QAA in conjunction with HEFCE and/or the college's awarding body(ies) as appropriate. The college's action plan in response to the conclusions of the Summative review will be published as part of the report.

## Executive summary

### The Summative review of Northern College carried out in June 2011

As a result of its investigations, the Summative review team (the team) considers that there can be **confidence** in the College's management of its responsibilities, as set out in its partnership agreements, for the standards of the awards it offers on behalf of its awarding bodies. The team also considers that there can be **confidence** in the College's management of its responsibilities, as set out in its partnership agreements, for the quality of learning opportunities it offers. The team considers that reliance **can** be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

### Good practice

The team has identified the following good practice for dissemination:

- the inclusion of a critical thinking and academic writing course within the CertEd/PGCE
- the use of the traffic light system to identify at-risk students for further action on the Foundation Degree, and the exit interview process for determining the reasons for a student's withdrawal and to assist retention
- taking account of student views in determining the priorities for capital expenditure in support of the quality of learning opportunities offered to students.

### Recommendations

The team has also identified a number of recommendations for the enhancement of the higher education provision.

The team considers that it would be **advisable** for the College to:

- implement a formal structure which clearly articulates how responsibilities for managing and delivering higher education standards are delegated within the management and committee structure of the College, and that this process is completed before any expansion of the College's higher education provision
- engage more formally and explicitly with the Academic Infrastructure to ensure that full account is taken of recognised effective practice in the management of academic standards and quality of its current and future higher education provision
- consider ways in which the College's oversight of its higher education provision could be enhanced by developing further the roles of the Higher Education Coordinator and the Higher Education Strategy and Development Group
- review its Teaching and Learning Policy to ensure that staff have clear guidance on the College's strategies for teaching, learning and assessment of its higher education provision and that this Policy is overseen and led by an appropriate committee
- consider working with its awarding body to review existing agreements between employers, students and the College to ensure that responsibilities and expectations for support and learning resources are clear when students undertake work-based or placement learning.

The team considers that it would be **desirable** for the College to:

- explicitly identify higher education provision within college policies as a means of facilitating the planning and development of its higher education portfolio
- implement a formal mechanism to facilitate the sharing of good practice across higher education programmes.

## A Introduction and context

1 This report presents the findings of the Summative review of higher education funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) conducted at Northern College (the College). The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the College discharges its responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes which the College delivers on behalf of the University of Bradford and the University of Huddersfield. The review was carried out by Dr Patsy Campbell, Mr Peter Hymans (reviewers) and Mr Grant Horsburgh (coordinator).

2 The Summative review team (the team) conducted the review in agreement with the College and in accordance with *The handbook for Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review* (the handbook), published by QAA. Evidence in support of the Summative review included a self-evaluation document with an accompanying portfolio of qualitative and quantitative supporting evidence which contained information on higher education policy and procedures; partnership agreements; meeting minutes; reports resulting from internal monitoring and review activities; external examiner reports; course leaflets and handbooks. The team also took account of the outcome of a meeting with students, reports of reviews by QAA and from inspections by Ofsted. During the IQER scoping exercise undertaken by QAA in 2007-08 the College had fewer than 50 full-time equivalent students enrolled on higher education programmes. As a result, this Summative review was undertaken as a desk-based study and conducted in accordance with the arrangements for Summative review for colleges with fewer than 50 full-time equivalent students. As a consequence, the College elected not to participate in a Developmental engagement prior to this Summative review. The review also considered the College's use of the Academic Infrastructure, developed by QAA on behalf of higher education providers, with reference to the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*, subject and award benchmark statements, *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and programme specifications.

3 In order to assist HEFCE to gain information to assist with the assessment of the impact of Foundation Degree awards, section D of this report summarises details of the Foundation Degree programme delivered at the College.

4 The Northern College for Residential Adult Education is one of four residential colleges in England, which in turn are among the 10 providers named as Specialist Designated Institutions. The College, which was established in 1978, is based at Wentworth Castle in Barnsley. It emerged out of the powerful labour movement which had developed in South Yorkshire and which had close links with education and training. At the heart of the College is the desire to offer educational opportunities to adults from disadvantaged groups and communities. From its establishment through to the present day, the themes that have dominated its thinking and its actions have been widening participation to individuals, groups and communities in the region and beyond, and at the same time providing the highest quality of education for those learners. The College, through its commitment to widening participation and ongoing quality enhancement, sees itself as being central to community regeneration and cohesion, and ultimately economic regeneration in old industrial regions. It works within a context that values education and training and, in particular, lifelong learning, as being the central dimension for both individual and community growth and future economic and social well-being.

5 The College offers a mix of part and full-time programmes of study, including day schools, two and three-day courses, full-time and part-time Access to Higher Education Diploma and part-time higher education courses. It is a small institution and, although the



number of higher education students doubled in 2009-10, the proportion of higher education students remains small. The College's residential provision, specialist curriculum and outreach work attracts approximately 7,000 students each year. Although the majority of students are from the counties of South and West Yorkshire, the residential nature of the College's provision, and the specific nature of its curriculum, also attract students from the wider Yorkshire and Humber region and further afield.

6 The College's mission is: 'To provide opportunities for the transformation of individuals and communities and promote social change through the provision of outstanding adult residential and community based learning'. Higher education courses make a clear contribution to the delivery of this mission. The College specialises in widening participation and has a long tradition of offering learning pathways which take learners from unaccredited courses through to levels 2 and 3, onto programmes bridging levels 3 and 4 and, more recently, courses at level 5. Frequently, students will have a relationship with the College over a number of years, increasing the range and level of their learning as they progress.

7 The College's HEFCE-funded higher education provision in 2010-11 is shown below under the awarding bodies, with full-time equivalent student enrolments in brackets. All students are part-time.

#### **University of Bradford**

- FdA Community Regeneration and Development (2.5)

#### **University of Huddersfield**

- Certificate in Education (Lifelong Learning) (CertEd) and Professional Graduate Certificate in Education (Lifelong Learning) (PGCE) (35)

### **Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies**

8 The College has current partnership agreements with the University of Bradford and the University of Huddersfield. The partnership agreements have been developed by the awarding bodies to take account of the requirements of the *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)*. The FdA Community Regeneration and Development is delivered through a franchise agreement and the CertEd and PGCE are operated through the Consortium for Post-Compulsory Education and Training. The awarding bodies retain responsibility for the academic standard of their awards, including programme approval and monitoring, the appointment of external examiners and also the approval of teaching staff. The College has responsibility for daily quality management, recruitment, programme organisation and timetabling, and student support (both academic and pastoral). The maintenance of academic standards is monitored and supported through existing quality systems without unduly replicating processes. The CertEd and PGCE have a named centre manager who also acts as course leader and tutor. The Foundation Degree has a named course leader who coordinates and teaches on the programme.

9 The College is one of a large group of colleges from across North Yorkshire which provides courses validated and awarded by the University of Huddersfield and coordinated through the University of Huddersfield Distributed Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training. The University of Huddersfield provision is further supported through the Consortium for Post-Compulsory Education and Training, of which Northern College is a member.

## **Recent developments in higher education at the College**

10 Two key changes are planned to the College's higher education provision during 2011-12 in response to the changing needs of learners and employers. In partnership with the University of Huddersfield, the College will offer a Bachelor of Arts in Education and Professional Development from September 2011. This will provide a progression pathway for students from level 3 and 4 courses through the CertEd and to a bachelor's degree with honours. The College will cease to offer the FdA Community Regeneration and Development once the current final cohort of students completes in September 2011. Demand for the course has dwindled as the economic climate has changed and low numbers means that the course is not financially viable.

## **Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission**

11 Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the Summative review team. The submission was developed through four groups of students being offered the opportunity to discuss the three core themes. Students were also able to provide comment by completing an online survey. Students commented that involvement in the process had been a positive and informative experience. At the preparatory meeting, the coordinator and review support officer met with 10 students from the two courses included within the scope of the Summative review. The student written submission and the discussion with students at the preparatory meeting provided the team with a valuable and helpful insight to the learning experience of higher education students at the College.

## **B Evaluation of the management of HEFCE-funded higher education**

### **Core theme 1: Academic standards**

#### **How are responsibilities for managing and delivering higher education standards delegated within the management structure and what reporting arrangements are in place?**

12 The awarding bodies are responsible for establishing and monitoring quality and academic standards of higher education provision offered by the College. Students are bound by university regulations and the College follows university requirements. The roles and responsibilities of the awarding bodies and the College are laid out clearly in the partnership agreements. In both cases the awarding body must ratify all academic aspects of the provision at validation, approve the qualifications of college staff who teach on courses within their award, appoint the external examiners and run the Board of Examiners for the relevant programme.

13 The University of Huddersfield Consortium for Post-Compulsory Education and Training provides a thorough and helpful handbook which clarifies in explicit detail the arrangements between the University and its college partners. The University works closely with the College to ensure that the partnership is managed effectively. The Consortium for Post-Compulsory Education and Training handbook provides the College with clear and appropriate guidance on running, monitoring and enhancing the provision.

14 The College will cease to offer the FdA Community Development and Regeneration when the current cohort of students completes the programme in 2011. The rationale behind this decision stems from the ending of regeneration initiatives which reduced demand for the programme. However, the College acknowledged that a lack of clarity in college and awarding body roles and responsibilities, and a series of unfortunate personal circumstances within the college and the university management teams had an adverse impact on the successful running of the programme and informed the decision to terminate the partnership with the awarding body. The team supports the College's decision to terminate this programme.

15 Senior management responsibility for higher education resides with the Vice-Principal Academic Programmes. Each programme has a lead tutor who liaises with awarding bodies and a coordinator who oversees student progress and reports to internal committees. The College has appointed a Higher Education Coordinator and convened a Higher Education Strategy and Development Group to oversee its higher education provision. The Group includes library and information technology staff, course leaders and tutors. Its remit is to discuss and plan for future developments in higher education that will provide progression routes for curriculum areas that help support the College mission. The Group meets twice each year and reports to the college Senior Management Team. It has a developmental remit, but also discusses and monitors quality and reports to Academic Standards Committee on sharing good practice between higher education programmes.

16 The College has clear, robust and formal arrangements in place to manage, deliver and report on its further education provision. However, the team was unable to identify similar clear, robust and formal arrangements within the management structure for its higher education provision. For example, it is not clear where or when the role of the Higher Education Coordinator or the remit of the Higher Education Strategy and Development Group were formally approved. College representatives acknowledged that the Higher Education Coordinator had been inadvertently omitted from the management and committee structure of the College. College governors are considering how best to identify higher education as a separate strand within the College. As a matter of some priority, the College is strongly advised to implement a formal structure which clearly articulates how responsibilities for managing and delivering higher education standards are delegated within the management and committee structure of the College and that this process is completed before any expansion of the College's higher education provision.

### **What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?**

17 The recent Ofsted report shows that the College is fully conversant with the benchmarks, levels and quality requirements associated with further education. However, the team found limited awareness among staff of the relevance of the Academic Infrastructure. Higher education staff are directed to and can access the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students* through the College's virtual learning environment. This section of the *Code of practice* featured on the agenda of meetings of higher education staff during a discussion of good practice in assessment. All sections of the *Code of practice* are available on the College's virtual learning environment for staff to consult, and the University of Huddersfield leads in directing academic staff to relevant sections, for example, *Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)*.

18 Overall, the team found little evidence of active engagement with the Academic Infrastructure in the self-evaluation package. College representatives acknowledged that it would be beneficial for its processes and procedures to refer more explicitly to elements of the Academic Infrastructure and for its committees to engage more formally with these. The team strongly recommends that it would be advisable for the College to engage more formally and explicitly with the Academic Infrastructure to ensure that full account is taken of

recognised effective practice in the management of the academic standards and quality of its current and future higher education provision.

**How does the College assure itself that it is fulfilling its obligations to ensure that the standards of higher education provision meet the requirements of validating partners and awarding bodies?**

19 College representatives are involved at all stages of programme design, monitoring and review; assessment; responding to external examiner reports; managing the College's relationship with its awarding bodies; and in responding to student feedback. The college committee structure provides a well-developed and robust system for monitoring student progress and achievement.

20 College representatives indicated that a review of higher education policies and procedures is in progress. On completion, policies will be sent to college governors for approval. College representatives acknowledge that there would be benefit in explicitly identifying higher education within college policies as this would assist in planning more effectively higher education development, should the intended expansion of its provision proceed. The team concurs with this view and recommends that it is desirable for the College to explicitly identify higher education provision within college policies as a means of facilitating the planning and development of its higher education portfolio.

21 The College gathers students' views about its provision at the end of each module by questionnaires and discussion. This informs a report on each course which is included in the annual monitoring report submitted to college committees for discussion and action. Subsequently, the annual monitoring report is passed to the awarding bodies for formal discussion, action and ratification. Decisions for action taken at examination boards and awarding body committees are fed back to the College for action at meetings of the Academic Board in time for implementation in the following session.

22 The annual monitoring report is the main tool used by the College to evaluate the effectiveness of its structure and processes for managing standards. The annual report for higher education is presented by the course leader to the Workforce Development Programme Committee, then to the Academic Standards Committee and finally to the Quality Committee and Board of Governors.

23 Course change and development are planned within the Higher Education Coordination Group and its proposals go to the Senior Management Team for approval. The decision to withdraw from the FdA Community Regeneration and Development was made in this group in 2009 and the viability issues surrounding the proposal to proceed with an Integrated Literacy Specialist Cert Ed/PGCE in 2012 will be considered there. At operational level, annual away days supplemented by team meetings at least three times each year are used to plan programmes and schedules. Email is used to circulate information from Consortium for Post-Compulsory Education and Training meetings.

**What are the College's arrangements for staff development to support the achievement of appropriate academic standards?**

24 The College has provided a variety of staff development and research opportunities attended by higher education teaching staff in the past year. These covered a wide range of topics relevant to the achievement of academic standards and to support personal and professional development. Several staff have also been supported to complete PGCEs and master's degrees. Annual appraisals and observations are embedded practices. The College has effective arrangements in place for the development of higher education staff.

25 The University of Huddersfield, together with the Consortium for Post-Compulsory Education and Training and University of Huddersfield Distributed Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training, provide a programme of development events for staff from partner institutions. The University offered a development day to encourage more applications to the Higher Education Academy from staff across the consortium. The College has paid Academy membership fees for one staff member and one other became a Fellow of the Academy in 2010. Higher education staff are encouraged to engage in research, attend the annual conference at the University School of Education, and Consortium for Post-Compulsory Education and Training and University of Huddersfield Distributed Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training meetings to discuss relevant matters with their peers as a valuable part of the higher education teaching experience.

**The team concludes that it has confidence in the College's management of its responsibilities as set out in its partnership agreements, for the management and delivery of the standards of the awards it offers on behalf of its awarding bodies.**

## **Core theme 2: Quality of learning opportunities**

### **How are responsibilities for managing the quality of learning opportunities for higher education programmes delegated within the management structure and what reporting arrangements are in place?**

26 Under the terms of its agreements with its awarding bodies, the College is responsible for providing premises, facilities, as well as teaching and support staff for the delivery of its higher education programmes with the proviso that the awarding body will have control of the quality of teaching staff. The University of Huddersfield Distributed Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training provides details of the extensive support and services available to the College and its students from the consortium.

27 The college structure includes lines of management for the elements that comprise the learning opportunities, with a Head of Student Services responsible for additional support, the Counsellor and Children's Services; and a Head of Library and Learning Technologies. Both posts report upwards through the Vice Principal (Academic), although the Head of Student Services post is currently vacant. This is an interim structure, but the College assured the team that it has implemented appropriate means to ensure that the management of student services remains secure.

28 The College has produced a paper, Teaching and Learning Performance Indicators 2010/2011, which has within it monitoring information relating to aspects of student support such as the percentage of students who receive three tutorials per year. This document shows a distinct difference in expected responses for student satisfaction between CertEd/PGCE and Foundation Degree students, which reflects the College's own concerns regarding the quality of the learning opportunities on the FdA Community Regeneration and Development.

29 Overall, the team considers that the College has adequate procedures for the management of its responsibilities under the terms of its agreements and takes appropriate action when required. However, the College's oversight of its higher education provision would be enhanced if the roles of the Higher Education Coordinator and the Higher Education Strategy and Development Group were developed further. The College is strongly advised to consider ways in which this might be achieved.

**How does the College assure itself that it is fulfilling its obligations to its awarding bodies to ensure that students receive appropriate learning opportunities?**

30 An annual report is produced by Student Services which informs the College's self-assessment process and is considered by the Academic Standards Committee. A governor-level committee meets annually to consider the minutes of the Academic Standards Committee.

31 The College is responsible for marketing, admissions and induction to both its programmes. The induction to the CertEd/PGCE consists of a three-day programme of events organised by the College, including a visit to the university library. In the current session funding was obtained for a short course in critical thinking and academic writing which was available to both new and existing CertEd/PGCE students. Although funding is not available in future, the course will be integrated into the main programme. The inclusion of a critical thinking and academic writing course within the CertEd/PGCE is an example of good practice in supporting students.

32 The CertEd/PGCE benefits from membership of the Consortium for Post-Compulsory Education and Training and University of Huddersfield Distributed Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training through which a number of opportunities are available for the sharing of good practice. The FdA Community Regeneration and Development has not had the same opportunities for the sharing of good practice. Internally, good practice is disseminated through a standing agenda item at each academic staff meeting, through the internal paired peer observations, through staff development events and through the peer review of teaching materials.

**What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?**

33 As noted in paragraphs 17 and 18, the College relies heavily on its awarding bodies to ensure its provision is congruent with the Academic Infrastructure. As noted in paragraph 18, the team recommends strongly that it would be advisable for the College to engage more formally and explicitly with the Academic Infrastructure to ensure that full account is taken of recognised effective practice in the management of the academic standards and quality of its current and future higher education provision.

**How does the College assure itself that the quality of teaching and learning is being maintained and enhanced?**

34 The College has a Teaching and Learning Policy which was posted on the virtual learning environment during the desk-based review. While the policy appears to relate specifically to higher education and refers to another more comprehensive document, the Guide to Good Practice in Teaching and Learning, staff delivering higher education programmes would benefit from further guidance about the College's strategies for teaching, learning and assessment at higher education levels. The mechanism followed prior to the publication of the Policy is unclear as there is no reference to it being discussed or approved by college committees. The team strongly recommends that it would be advisable for the College to review its Teaching and Learning Policy to ensure that staff have clear guidance about the College's strategies for teaching, learning and assessment of its higher education provision and that this Policy is overseen and led by an appropriate committee.

35 The College has a whole-college approach to the observation of teaching and learning. Observations of sessions are carried out on all full-time staff at least once each year. Part-time or sessional staff are observed within their first academic year. Full-time staff

who have been observed attend a discussion meeting with the Principal to look at the outcomes of the observation. Higher education programmes are identified within the report, but not all staff teaching on them are observed while teaching a higher education session. The College produces a detailed and thorough annual report on lesson observations containing priorities for the following session. The report is considered by the Academic Standards Committee with minutes being considered by the Governors' Quality Committee.

36 Teaching staff have established informal mechanisms to discuss their teaching practice. The Higher Education Coordinating Group has a remit to establish formal structures to facilitate the sharing of good practice between higher education programmes, but at the time of the visit this had not been implemented. The team recommends that it is desirable for the College to implement a formal mechanism to facilitate the sharing of good practice across higher education programmes.

37 Generally, students report that the standard of teaching is good. Students at the preparatory meeting reported that teaching was excellent on both programmes. The student written submission's view was that, while the quality of teaching is good, less formal methods and more variety would be preferred.

38 Within the Teaching and Learning Policy the College requires that all tutors are appropriately qualified according to current Institute for Learning and awarding body requirements. Normally this means being qualified to degree level in a relevant subject alongside a suitable teaching qualification. The policy also states that tutors working at higher education levels should be engaged in appropriate research and scholarly activity within their subject area and ensure that they keep up to date with relevant published research papers and texts. All staff have been approved by the respective awarding bodies in accordance with the partnership agreements.

### **How does the College assure itself that students are supported effectively?**

39 Under the terms of the agreements with the awarding bodies the universities are responsible for the provision of additional learning support. CertEd/PGCE students with additional learning needs are referred to the University, but if the response is slow College staff provide interim support. Students report that, in general, academic support is excellent and is good online. However, in the student written submission a comment was made that personal support was sometimes little. Also, FdA Community Regeneration and Development students reported that it is difficult to get additional learning support.

40 The College gathers feedback on student support through a variety of means. The awarding body sends an annual questionnaire directly to CertEd/PGCE students. The College also seeks student views through a group tutorial session held at every teaching session, at which student concerns about the college experience or the programme can be addressed, and the content of teaching sessions negotiated. More formally, twice-yearly Student Panel/Centre Committee meetings are held, where student representatives meet teaching team members and the University's designated Academic Liaison Officer. These address student concerns and respond to identified needs. For the FdA Community Regeneration and Development, most matters are addressed during informal discussions between the Course Leader and students.

41 Data on progress and retention is considered formally at the Student Progress Committee in the form of a report from each programme. The FdA Community Regeneration and Development report includes a traffic light system to identify students at risk of non-completion. The College has a formal withdrawal process which includes an interview with the student. In some cases, students on the education programme have been retained by offering options to defer study because of mitigating circumstances. The use of the

traffic light system to identify at risk students for further action on the FdA Community Regeneration and Development, and the exit interview process for determining the reasons for a student's withdrawal and to assist retention on the course, are examples of good practice in supporting students.

42 The College recognises that part-time students need support in between attendance to maintain engagement in the programme. Tutorials are conducted face to face, over the phone, and/or through email. Students use the virtual learning environment discussion board at the University to engage in dialogue with peers and tutors about both practical and theoretical matters. Within the parameters of a scheme of work, cohorts can negotiate timings and content of sessions according to their needs and interests. Current students have now created their own social network site page to extend this element of peer support, and college staff have engaged with this to enhance further student support.

43 All students have an element of work-based learning included in their courses, either as a placement or as employees. However, the entitlement to student support while at work or undertaking placements was not clear. Discussions with staff led the team to believe that the College was unaware of the precepts and explanations set out in the *Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning*, or that there should be a formal agreement between the parties involved to ensure that responsibilities and expectations of each are clearly defined. As the learning undertaken in the work place is an integral part of the CertEd/PGCE, and the students are drawn from organisations other than further education institutions, the team considers that reviewing the existing agreement between the College, employers and students would enable students to take better advantage of learning opportunities in their place of work. The team recommends that it is advisable for the College to consider working with its awarding body to review agreements between employers, students and the College to ensure that responsibilities and expectations for support and learning resources are clear when students undertake work-based or placement learning.

### **What are the College's arrangements for staff development to maintain and/or enhance the quality of learning opportunities?**

44 The College's arrangements for staff development to maintain and enhance the quality of learning opportunities are discussed in paragraphs 24 and 25.

### **How does the College ensure the sufficiency and accessibility of the learning resources the students need to achieve the intended learning outcomes for their programmes?**

45 The College is located in an old building which provides an atmosphere that students and staff find appropriate for the delivery of higher education programmes. The library has expanded its collection of books and e-books in the last two years to facilitate greater access for part-time students, including prospective students for the proposed bachelor's degree. The library is available during evening periods, which is particularly helpful for students who choose to stay overnight at the College. The library has a student panel meeting and organises student satisfaction surveys to gain the views of students on all its courses.

46 The College monitors the sufficiency and accessibility of learning resources through its committee structure. The remit of the Higher Education Coordination Group includes consideration of current and future resource needs specific to higher education programmes. The University of Huddersfield monitors the availability of resources through receipt of the annual report. Capital funding is received from the education consortium and the priorities for its use have been determined by programme staff in conjunction with students on the



course. In the current year, a number of tablet computers have been purchased which students may borrow from the college library. The team regard the taking account of student views in determining the priorities for capital expenditure as an example of good practice in support of the quality of learning opportunities offered to students.

**The team concludes that it has confidence in the College's management of its responsibilities for the quality of the learning opportunities, as required by the awarding bodies, to enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.**

### **Core theme 3: Public information**

#### **What information is the College responsible for publishing about its HEFCE-funded higher education?**

47 The University of Huddersfield Distributed Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training agreement has delegated responsibility for publishing information about its higher education provision to the College. This is in accord with the university policy set out in the Handbook of Quality Assurance Procedures for Taught Courses. All marketing and publicity information pertaining to higher education provision issued by the College requires specific prior approval of the relevant school on behalf of the University.

48 The College produces its own publicity material for the CertEd/PGCE in accordance with awarding body requirements. Material is checked and approved by the University before publication. Published materials are available in print and electronically through the college website. Course handbooks are standard across the consortium and are produced by the University.

49 As the FdA Community Regeneration and Development is about to terminate, the College is not producing recruitment material for this course. The University of Bradford issued a handbook to students during their induction. Level 1 and 2 student handbooks and module handbooks for this award were produced by the College and approved by the University of Bradford.

#### **What arrangements does the College have in place to assure the accuracy and completeness of information the College has responsibility for publishing? How does the College know that these arrangements are effective?**

50 The College has effective arrangements in place to assure the accuracy and completeness of information that it is responsible for publishing. The Centre Manager is responsible for ensuring that web-based information and other related material is signed-off at the College and submitted to the Quality Manager at the University of Huddersfield for approval prior to publication.

51 Students have mixed views on the usefulness and accessibility of course information provided by the College and its awarding bodies, particularly regarding the use of the college and awarding body virtual learning environments. Generally, students expressed the view that they would prefer to have course material in hard copy. Overall, the team concluded that course information provided by the College is fit for purpose.

52 The College reviews its publications annually following the teaching team away day, with some revisions made more frequently as appropriate. Where information is changeable,

for example in relation to student finance, hyperlinks are used and checked regularly to ensure that these remain viable.

**The team considers that reliance can be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.**

## **C Summary of findings from the Developmental engagement in assessment**

53 As the total full-time equivalent students funded by HEFCE at the College is less than 100, in accordance with the published review method, the College elected not to take part in a Developmental engagement.

## **D Foundation Degrees**

54 At the time of the review, the College delivered one Foundation Degree, the FdA Community Regeneration and Development awarded by the University of Bradford. The College will cease to offer this Foundation Degree when the current cohort of students completes the programme in 2011 and has no plans to include Foundation Degrees in its higher education portfolio in the immediate future. The rationale behind this decision stems from the ending of regeneration initiatives, which reduced demand for the programme.

## **E Conclusions and summary of judgements**

55 The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in Northern College's management of its responsibilities for academic standards and for the quality of learning opportunities of the awards the College offers on behalf of its awarding bodies. This was based upon discussion with staff and students and scrutiny of evidence provided by the College and its awarding bodies, the University of Bradford and the University of Huddersfield.

56 In the course of the review, the team identified the following areas of **good practice**:

- the inclusion of a critical thinking and academic writing course within the CertEd/PGCE (paragraph 31)
- the use of the traffic light system to identify at-risk students for further action on the Foundation Degree, and the exit interview process for determining the reasons for a student's withdrawal and to assist retention (paragraph 41)
- taking account of student views in determining the priorities for capital expenditure in support of the quality of learning opportunities offered to students (paragraph 46).

57 The team also makes some recommendations for consideration by the College and its awarding bodies.

58 The team considers that it is **advisable** for the College to:

- implement a formal structure which clearly articulates how responsibilities for managing and delivering higher education standards are delegated within the management and committee structure of the College, and that this process is

completed before any expansion of the College's higher education provision (paragraph 16)

- engage more formally and explicitly with the Academic Infrastructure to ensure that full account is taken of recognised effective practice in the management of academic standards and quality of its current and future higher education provision (paragraphs 18 and 33)
- consider ways in which the College's oversight of its higher education provision could be enhanced by developing further the roles of the Higher Education Coordinator and the Higher Education Strategy and Development Group (paragraph 29)
- review its Teaching and Learning Policy to ensure that staff have clear guidance on the College's strategies for teaching, learning and assessment of its higher education provision and that this Policy is overseen and led by an appropriate committee (paragraph 34)
- consider working with its awarding body to review existing agreements between employers, students and the College to ensure that responsibilities and expectations for support and learning resources are clear when students undertake work-based or placement learning (paragraph 43).

59 The team considers that it is **desirable** for the College to:

- explicitly identify higher education provision within college policies as a means of facilitating the planning and development of its higher education portfolio (paragraph 20)
- implement a formal mechanism to facilitate the sharing of good practice across higher education programmes (paragraph 36).

60 Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, and other documentary evidence and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes that it has **confidence** that, in the context of this Summative review, the College discharges its responsibilities effectively, as set out in the relevant partnership agreement for the management of the standards of the awards of its awarding bodies.

61 Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, and other documentary evidence and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes that it has **confidence** that, in the context of this Summative review, the College discharges its responsibilities effectively, as set out in the relevant partnership agreement for the management of the quality of learning opportunities to enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

62 Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, and other documentary evidence and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes that, in the context of this Summative review, reliance **can** be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

Northern College action plan relating to the Summative review: June 2011						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
In the course of the Summative review the team identified the following areas of <b>good practice</b> that are worthy of wider dissemination within the College:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the inclusion of a critical thinking and academic writing course within the CertEd/PGCE (paragraph 31)</li> </ul>	Offer Critical Thinking courses for higher education students as part of short course programme for 2011-12	September 2011	Course leaders	Higher education students have opportunity to practice critical analysis before joining higher education course	Higher education Strategy, Development and Coordination group	Higher education Strategy, Development and Coordination group minutes; short course booklets; student feedback
	Integrate academic writing support sessions within higher education programmes	From September 2011	Module tutors	Higher education students are more confident about appropriate academic writing styles	Higher education Strategy, Development and Coordination group	Higher education Strategy, Development and Coordination group minutes; student feedback; session plans
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the use of the traffic light system to identify at-risk students for further action on the Foundation</li> </ul>	Traffic Light system to be used in reporting processes at Student Progress Committee for all higher education students	From September 2011	Course leaders; Personal tutors	More effective and better coordinated interventions; improved retention	Student Progress Committee; Higher education Strategy, Development and Coordination group	Student progress reports; Student Progress Committee minutes; Higher education Strategy,

Degree, and the exit interview process for determining the reasons for a student's withdrawal and to assist retention (paragraph 41)	Offer exit interviews to all higher education students who wish to withdraw	From September 2011	Course leaders; Personal tutors	Better intelligence on risk factors for withdrawal; improved chances of students deferring and/or continuing at a later date	Student Progress Committee	Development and Coordination group minutes  Student progress reports; Student Progress Committee minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>taking account of student views in determining the priorities for capital expenditure in support of the quality of learning opportunities offered to students (paragraph 46).</li> </ul>	Consult students when capital expenditure is available for resources	From September 2011	Course leaders; Academic Manager Library and Learning Resources Centre	Student resources meet students' needs more effectively	Student Panel Committee; Higher education Strategy, Development and Coordination group	Student Panel Committee minutes; Higher education Strategy, Development and Coordination group; Library and Learning Resources Centre action plan reports
<b>Advisable</b>	<b>Action to be taken</b>	<b>Target date</b>	<b>Action by</b>	<b>Success indicators</b>	<b>Reported to</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
The team considers that it is <b>advisable</b> for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>implement a formal structure which clearly articulates how responsibilities for managing and</li> </ul>	Review current structure and produce proposal document: Managing and delivering higher education	October 2011	Higher education Coordinator; Access to Higher education Academic Manager; Vice	Proposal document outlining clear structures for the management and delivery of higher	Senior Management Team/AMT; Higher education Strategy, Development and	Senior Management Team/AMT minutes; Higher education Strategy and development

delivering higher education standards are delegated within the management and committee structure of the College, and that this process is completed before any expansion of the College's higher education provision (paragraph 16)	Agree and implement structure	November 2011	Principal Academic  Senior Management Team	education  More effective and clearly articulated management of higher education	Coordination group; Academic Standards Committee  Senior Management Team; Higher education Strategy, Development and Coordination group; Academic Standards Committee	group minutes; Academic Standards Committee Minutes  Senior Management Team minutes; Academic Standards Committee minutes; Higher education Strategy, Development and Coordination group minutes; Managing and Delivering Higher education document
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>engage more formally and explicitly with the Academic Infrastructure to ensure that full account is taken of recognised effective practice in the management of academic standards and</li> </ul>	Map processes for management and delivery of HE to Academic Infrastructure and articulate these clearly within College policies and processes	July 2012	Vice Principal Academic; Higher education Coordinator; Quality Manager; Access to Higher education Academic Manager; Huddersfield University Centre Manager	College policies explicitly refer to HE and to Academic Infrastructure; Clearer understanding of Academic Infrastructure and effective management of academic standards in HE	Higher education Strategy, Development and Coordination group; Senior Management Team; Academic Standards Committee	Senior Management Team minutes; Higher education Strategy, Development and Coordination group minutes; policy documents

quality of its current and future higher education provision (paragraphs 18 and 33)						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>consider ways in which the College's oversight of its higher education provision could be enhanced by developing further the roles of the Higher Education Coordinator and the Higher Education Strategy and Development Group (paragraph 29)</li> </ul>	Increase number of Higher education Strategy, Development and Coordination group meetings; schedule into college diary for 2011-12	September 2011	Higher education Coordinator	Higher education issues more effectively understood and addressed; more consistent attendance of key staff	Senior Management Team; Academic Standards Committee	College Diary; Higher education Strategy and Development group minutes; Senior Management Team minutes; Academic Standards Committee minutes
	Review remit of group	31 October 2011	Higher education group members	Higher education Strategy, Development and Coordination group	Senior Management Team; Academic Standards Committee	Document outlining remit; Senior Management Team minutes; Academic Standards Committee minutes
	Review remit of role	31 October 2011	Vice Principal Academic; Access to Higher education Academic Manager; Higher	Clearer understanding of Higher education Coordinator role; more effective operation of role	Senior Management Team	Senior Management Team minutes

			education Coordinator			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>review its Teaching and Learning Policy to ensure that staff have clear guidance on the College's strategies for teaching, learning and assessment of its higher education provision and that this Policy is overseen and led by an appropriate committee (paragraph 34)</li> </ul>	Review Teaching and Learning policy to more clearly articulate strategy for teaching, learning and assessment of HE provision	December 2011	Higher education Coordinator; Access to Higher education Academic Manager; Vice Principal Academic	Teaching and Learning policy more clearly articulates policy; staff have clearer guidance	Higher education Strategy, Development and Coordination group; Academic Standards Committee	Revised Teaching and Learning Policy; Higher education Strategy, Development and Coordination group minutes; Academic Standards Committee minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>consider working with its awarding body to review existing agreements between employers, students and the College to ensure that responsibilities and expectations for support and learning resources are</li> </ul>	Review current agreements to consider if they can be made more useful for students to use with their employers	January 2012	Higher education Coordinator; Course leaders; HE students	Students have more effective tool for seeking support from their employers	Higher education Strategy, Development and Coordination group	Higher education Strategy, Development and Coordination group minutes; agreement documents



clear when students undertake work-based or placement learning (paragraph 43).						
<b>Desirable</b>	<b>Action to be taken</b>	<b>Target date</b>	<b>Action by</b>	<b>Success indicators</b>	<b>Reported to</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
The team considers that it is <b>desirable</b> for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>explicitly identify higher education within college policies as a means of facilitating the planning and development of its higher education portfolio (paragraph 20)</li> </ul>	Review relevant College policies	July 2012	Senior Management Team; Quality Manager	Higher education is more explicitly identified; developments are more effectively planned	Senior Management Team; Academic Standards Committee	Policy documents; Senior Management Team meeting minutes; Academic Standards Committee minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>implement a formal mechanism to facilitate the sharing of good practice across higher education programmes (paragraph 36).</li> </ul>	Review, develop and implement process for sharing good practice across higher education programmes	December 2011	Higher education Coordinator; Vice Principal Academic; higher education teaching staff	Higher education good practice is documented, developed and shared	Higher education Strategy, Development and Coordination group; Academic Standards Committee	Higher education Strategy, Development and Coordination group minutes; HE teaching team meeting minutes; good practice guide; Academic Standards Committee

**RG 807 09/11**

**The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education**

Southgate House  
Southgate Street  
Gloucester  
GL1 1UB

Tel 01452 557000  
Fax 01452 557070  
Email [comms@qaa.ac.uk](mailto:comms@qaa.ac.uk)  
Web [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)